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Johnson Wants Stand-by Fund for Nike-X System

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 24 — President Johnson has asked Congress for \$377-million in standby funds for a possible start on production of the Nike-X missile. Mr. Johnson would be free to use these funds should there be a failure in talks with the Soviet Union about a mutual freeze on deployment of anti-missile systems.

When added to a concurrent request for \$421-million for continued development work and nearly \$168-million in unspent money voted by Congress last year for the Nike-X project, this would give the Administration nearly \$1-billion to spend in the next budget year for Nike-X if it decided to move into production.

Defense officials told reporters that should a production go-ahead be decided upon, the Administration was thinking of a deployment program costing \$4-billion to \$5-billion and placing priority on the protection of America's Minuteman and Titan intercontinental ballistic missiles from attack.

Other sources said such a level of expenditure might permit the use of the Nike-X for a "thin" defense of much of the United States against any relatively small attack that might be launched by Communist China some years hence, or by the Russians in an accidental or unauthorized firing of a part of their ICBM force.

By requesting substantial standby funds, the President served several purposes at once.

He served notice on Soviet officials that the United States was taking serious steps to prepare for production of antimissile missiles if a no-deployment agreement is not reached. This should give his negotiators additional leverage with the Russians.

He acted to disarm those in the military and in Congress who are pressing for a quick start on Nike-X deployment by providing plenty of money for just such a move.

He also moved to disarm those

Plans \$377-Million for Use, if Needed, to Start Work on Antimissile Defense

who insist that deployment of the Nike-X would be provocative and could, of itself, trigger a dangerous new upward spiral in the arms race.

Finally, by noting that if production begins this year it would be "for such purposes as defense of our offensive weapon systems," he continued to emphasize a strategy of trying to deter nuclear war by preserving America's retaliatory, strike-back capability.

In his budget message, Mr. Johnson devoted one paragraph to the question of antimissile defense. That paragraph reads as follows:

"In 1968, we will: continue intensive development of Nike-X but take no action now to deploy an anti-ballistic missile (ABM) defense; initiate discussions with the Soviet Union on the limitation of ABM deployments; in the event these discussions prove unsuccessful, we will reconsider our deployment decision. To provide for actions that may be required at that time, approximately \$375-million has been included in the 1968 budget for the production of Nike-X for such purposes as defense of our offensive weapon systems."

Officials pointed out that the standby request would provide for "initial production" activity, including the construction of production facilities for the three types of radars and two types of missiles that make up the system, tooling up such plants and making detailed blueprints for quantity production and other similar engineering arrangements.

In discussing the Nike-X, defense officials noted that they had decided to rename one of the missiles in the system. Hereafter, they will refer to the Nike Zeus, a long-range interceptor missile, as the Spartan.

the change in name. The shorter-range missile in the system is called the Sprint.

Among other major weapons decisions reflected in the budget were these:

¶ More than \$1-billion will go to produce and deploy new submarine-launched Poseidon missiles aimed at penetrating a sophisticated Soviet antimissile defense.

¶ About \$26-million will keep alive work on a possible follow-on advanced bomber, with emphasis placed on an engine that could power such an aircraft.

¶ Funds have nearly been doubled for the Manned Orbiting Laboratory stressing reconnaissance in space by human beings, with \$430-million sought this year against \$228-million last year.

¶ More than \$50-million is requested for purchase of nuclear components for a new atomic-powered aircraft carrier, to be funded next year, according to defense officials.

¶ Administration has decided to spend the money voted by Congress last year for a new nuclear-powered frigate.

On Capitol Hill today, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara declared that the Soviet Union was not ahead of the United States in development of an antimissile missile.

He said it was now "technically possible" for the United States to launch a missile that would seek out and destroy an enemy missile. But he conceded it would not be possible to destroy all the missiles an enemy might fire.

Mr. McNamara was speaking with newsmen after testifying before a closed, joint session of the Senate Armed Services Committee and Defense Appropriations subcommittee. He added:

"We are confident that we can penetrate any enemy defenses with our missiles. We know that we are more than the equal of any nation in the world."